

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-5040

1. Name

Historic 633 - 645 Melvin Street
and / common

2. Location

street & number 633 - 645 Melvin Street
city, town Baltimore
state & zip code Maryland 21205 county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name
street & number telephone
city, town state & zip code

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records liber
street & number Clarence Mitchell Courthouse folio
city, town Baltimore State Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title
date federal state county local
depository for survey records
city, town state & zip code

7. Description

Condition

☐ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check One

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check One

☒ original site
☐ moved:
date of move: _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This group of seven two-bay-wide, two-and-a-half story brick houses with gable roofs and dormer windows are unusual survivors in this part of Baltimore. The houses are typical of the paired groups of two-and-a-half story, Federal-style houses built in Baltimore in the 1820s. Most of the houses retain their original brick facades, which were always painted. 637 Melvin St. has been raised to a full three stories, with a shed roof and early-Italianate-style brick dentil cornice. 645 Melvin St. is a frame house covered with aluminum siding that is the only survivor of an original row of several frame houses at this location.

The houses are two-and-a-half stories in height, 13', 13'8", 14', and 14'6" wide and occupy lots ranging in depth from 50' to 89' deep because the parcel is sited on a triangular lot. Each two-room-deep house has its kitchen located in the tall basement. Because early house lots in Baltimore were laid out back to back, without rear service alleys, the only entrance to the backyard is through the sallyport located in the center of most pairs.

The houses are constructed in running bond, and were always painted. The pitched gable roofs are covered with modern asphalt shingles overtop the original cedar shakes. A simple corbelled brick cornice runs across the façade. Each of the dormer windows has a broken pediment. A double chimney located at the peak of the gable roof serves both the front and rear rooms.

The door and window openings have flat wood lintels and sills. The window openings are filled with either 1/1 or 6/6 replacement sash. Doorways have single-light transoms and are filled with six-panel doors. The houses sit on high basements, lit by a tall sash. The entrances are reached by six or seven wooden or brick steps, set parallel to the facade. Many houses have an entrance to the basement located directly beneath the steps. An arched alleyway runs between most pairs of houses.

The houses are two rooms deep, with the front room being entered directly from the front door. The front and back rooms of the first floor are separated by a wide opening, with the tightly winding, narrow stairs set in the rear room, in the space between the partition wall and the fireplace. There are two bedrooms on the second floor of the main part of the house, each with a fireplace, and a third room in the dormer story. The kitchen, with its own cooking fireplace, was located in the basement.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-5040

3. Significance

Period	Area of significance	check one & justify			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	X	community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/>	conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	X architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	X social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/>	engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/>	exploration	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theatre
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/>	invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other: specify

Specific dates c. 1795; c. 1820 - 1825

Builder/Architect

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This group of houses is especially significant as representing an unusual survival of Federal-style rowhouses in southwest Baltimore, built at a time when the neighborhood was just beginning to grow because of the increasing importance of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, the nation's first, incorporated in 1828. The row is extremely important due to the presence of a surviving frame house, which, according to city atlases, was only one of a small group of frame houses along this side of the block. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century most houses were built individually or in pairs, since this method involved less risk and less initial capital. By the 1820s and 1830s, however, builders were constructing longer rows of houses as speculative ventures.

The houses are especially significant because of their proximity to the Baltimore & Ohio railroad yards, the nation's first railroad, and its related railroad-oriented industries, like car and rail shops. Housing of this type was built to provide inexpensive housing for the wide variety of both Irish and German immigrants who came to southwest Baltimore to work in railroad-related industries in the decade before the Civil War.

Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Survey No. B-5040

9. Major Bibliographic References

Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse*
(New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999)

10. Geographic Data

Acreage of nominated property

Quadrangle name

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared by

name / title Dr. Mary Ellen Hayward

Organization The Alley House Project

street & number 1306 Carrollton Ave.

city, town Baltimore

date

telephone

state & zip code Maryland 21204

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of property rights.

Return to:

DHCP/DHCD

Maryland Historical Trust

100 Community Place

Crownsville MD 21032-2023



W. LOMI

B-5040

633-245 LOMI ST.
TALTO ID

UNIVERSITY
HOSPITAL

6th KING

EDISON
ILLUMINATING
CO.

A. BUSH
BEEF AGENCY

BOX FACTORY

CRANE
CO.

6th ST.

NORTH BROS.
STAINING &
CLOTHING
FACT.

HARRY
SORREBOE
CLOTHING

PORTLAND

ST. 40

S. PACA

CAMD

ST. 50

FURNITURE
MFG.

EMORY ST.

FURNITURE
MFG.

AVE.

ST.

WARNER

S. PACA

W. CONWAY

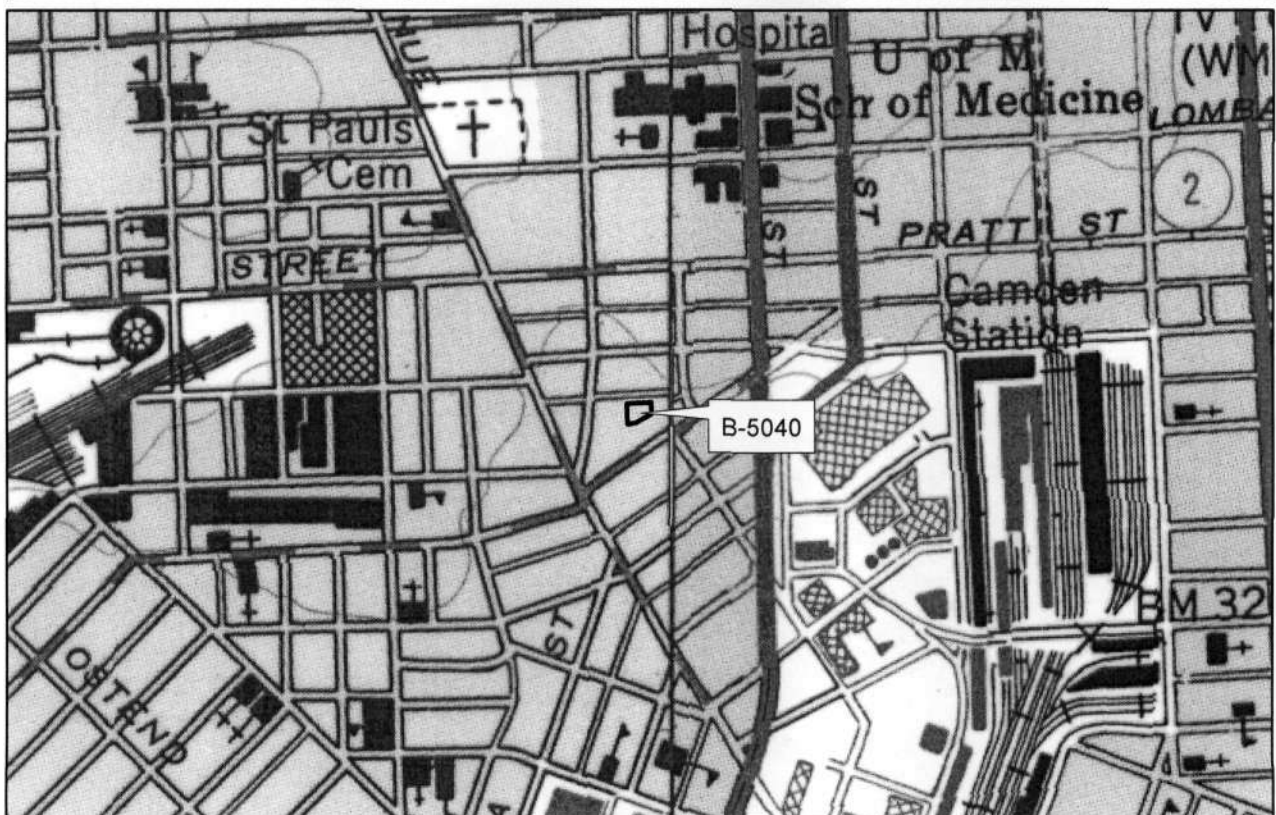
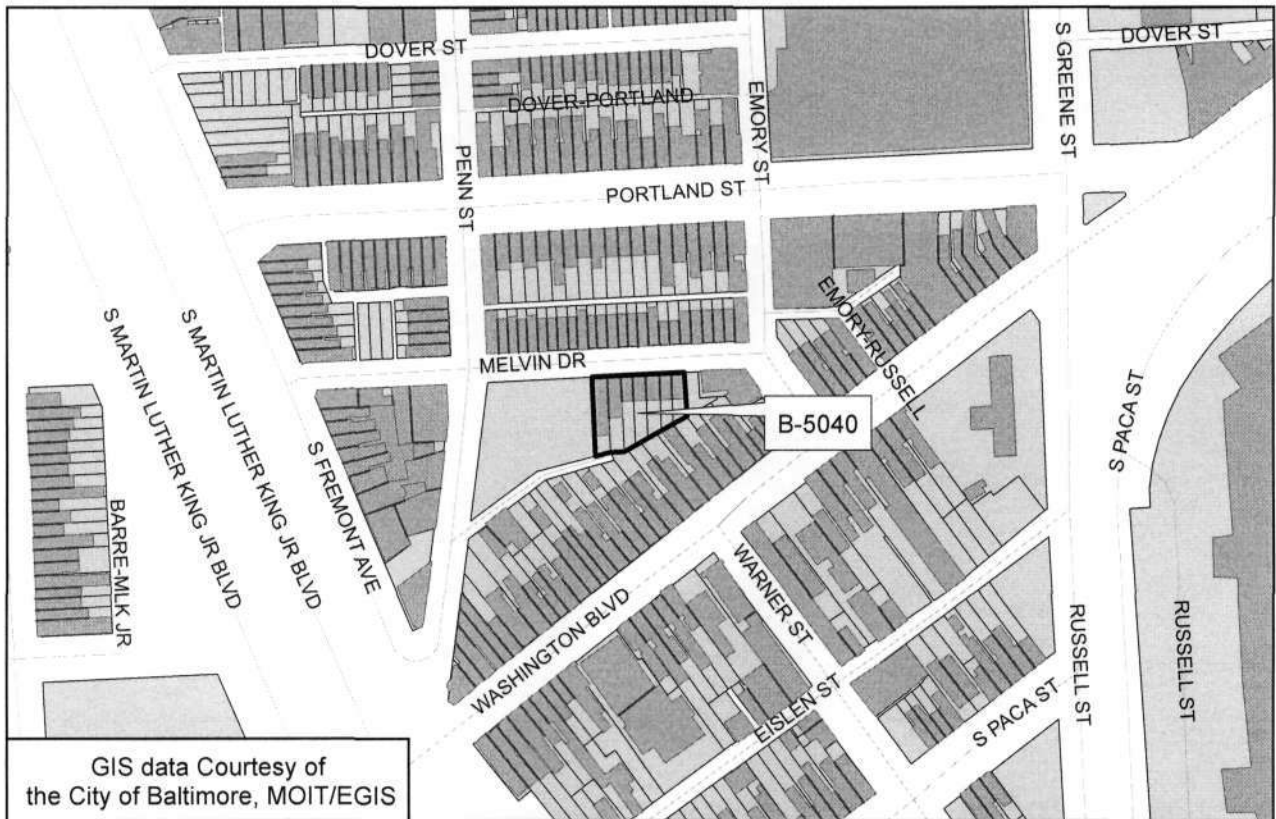
ST. WAYNE

S.B. SEXTON
STOVE WORKS

ST. CARROLL

W. BARRE

B-5040
633-645 Melvin Drive
Block 0685A Lots 080-086
Baltimore City
Baltimore West Quad





NO
STOPPING
←

RTJ-184

633-645 Melvin

SWB-1

[633-635]

B-3040.

633-645 Melvin St.

BARTO, MD

C. Belfiore

2/48

MD SAPD

1/4

1043841



633-645 Melvin
PWB-1

[637]

B-5040

633-645 Melvin St.

[637]

CACTO: HD

C. Balgonne

2/48

2/4

1033841 021

4 3 11 1



633-641 Melvin

[639-641]

B-5040

633-645 Melvin St

SWB-1

60 [639-641]

BALTO. MD

C. Belgrave

2/98

3/4

1023841 374 1 x 1 1/4 in



643-645 Melvin

SWB-1

B-5040

633-645 Melvin St.

[643-645]

BACD MD

C. Belfiore

2/98

4/4

201861 0211 7 8 N 2 0